

## ACHS SUMMARY FORM

1. Name: Joseph Higgins House

2. Planning Area/Site Number: 14/37/3 3. M-NCPPC Atlas Reference: Map 8  
Laytonsville H.D. I-10

4. Address: 21606 Laytonsville Road, Laytonsville

## 5. Classification Summary

Category <u>building</u>	Previous Survey Recording <u>M-NCPPC</u>
Ownership <u>private</u>	Title and Date: 1976 Inventory of
Public Acquisition <u>N/A</u>	Historical Sites
Status <u>occupied</u>	
Accessible <u>no</u>	Federal <u>    </u> State <u>x</u> County <u>x</u> Local <u>    </u>
Present use <u>private residence</u>	

6. Date: 1892

7. Original Owner: Joseph and Annie Bell Higgins

## 8. Apparent Condition

a. excellent b. unaltered c. original site

9. Description: This fine victorian home has some unusual architectural features. The house is in the shape of a non-geometric cross with the front extension facing east and the north extension being more of a bay. The most unusual feature is the varying heights of the roof ridges of each extension of the cross. The ridges meet at the central chimney with the front section several feet higher than the others. There is a screened-in sleeping porch attached to the second story south side of the rear extension just above the back porch. At the front of the house there is a corner wrap-around porch with gingerbread brackets and railings. The stone foundation, German siding, roofing of sheet metal, and shutters are the only features which are consistent with Laytonsville architecture.

10. Significance: This is the newest of the four houses in Laytonsville associated in some way with the Bell family. The land on the west side of Route 108 in Laytonsville was acquired by John Layton from John Adams in 1847, and it remained in his family for the next half century.

William D. Bell and Joseph C. Higgins opened a general store on the east side of Route 108 during the 1880's. Joseph's wife Annie and William were the children of Frank Bell, who owned a farm and wheelwright shop nearby. William Bell built a frame house for himself on the east side of the road in 1882, and the Higginses lived in the Bell tenant house. The Bell and Higgins store, built between the two houses, opened in 1885. That store lasted until the 1960's.

Eventually the partners agreed to separate. Joseph Higgins had bought the land on the west side of the road in 1892, and he and Annie Bell Higgins built their own house soon afterward. Their daughters Cornelia Higgins Howard and Rachel Higgins later Griffith used the house as a summer home, and later year round. It was sold to a cousin in 1961.

11. Researcher and date researched: Anne Wolf-10/79

John Barrow  
Arch. Description

12. Compiler: Gail Rothrock

13. Date Compiled: 10/79

14. Designation  
Approval     

15. Acreage: 60,797 sq. ft.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

M: 14/37/3  
Laytonsville H.D.  
MAGI#

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Joseph Higgins House

AND/OR COMMON

Maude Bell Riggs House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

21606 Laytonsville Road

CITY, TOWN

Laytonsville

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

—DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

—STRUCTURE

—SITE

—OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

—PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

—BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

—IN PROCESS

—BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

☒ OCCUPIED

—UNOCCUPIED

—WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

—YES: RESTRICTED

—YES: UNRESTRICTED

☒ NO

**PRESENT USE**

—AGRICULTURE

—COMMERCIAL

—EDUCATIONAL

—ENTERTAINMENT

—GOVERNMENT

—INDUSTRIAL

—MILITARY

—MUSEUM

—PARK

☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

—RELIGIOUS

—SCIENTIFIC

—TRANSPORTATION

—OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Maude B. Riggs

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

21606 Laytonsville Road

CITY, TOWN

Laytonsville

— VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Montgomery County Courthouse

Liber #: 2908

Folio #: 463

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland 20850

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

M-NCPPC Inventory of Historical Sites

DATE

1976

—FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☒ COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Park Historian's Office

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland 20855

## 7 DESCRIPTION

M. 14-37-3

### CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Joe Higgins house is a large victorian home with some unusual architectural features, most probably the result of imaginative problem solving by the builder.

The house is essentially in the shape of a non-geometric cross with the front extension facing east and the north extension being more of a bay. The most unusual feature of the house is the varying heights of the roof ridges of each extension of the cross. The ridges meet at the central chimney with the front section several feet higher than the others. There is a screened-in sleeping porch attached to the second story south side of the rear extension just above the back porch. At the front of the house there is a corner wrap-around porch with gingerbread brackets and railings.

The foundation (stone) German siding, roofing of sheet metal, and shutters are the only features of this house which are consistent with Laytonsville architecture. This building is unique to the community, with its more urbane victorian characteristics.

The house and grounds are in excellent condition and have been well-maintained throughout its 90 year history. The only modifications to the house are the inclusion of a forced-air furnace in the basement with one central register. The house is equipped with a fireplace in the parlor and has another centrally located chimney to accommodate wood stoves.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Local History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

**SPECIFIC DATES****BUILDER/ARCHITECT****STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

This is the newest of the four houses in Laytonsville associated in some way with the Bell family.

The land on the west side of Route 108 in Laytonsville was the last part of the old town to develop, perhaps because the land on the side of the road slopes downward from the level of the road. The land was acquired by John Layton from John Adams in 1847,<sup>1</sup> and it remained in his family for the next half century.

William D. Bell and Joseph C. Higgins opened a general store on the east side of Route 108 during the 1880's. Joseph's wife Annie and William were the children of Frank Bell, who owned a farm and wheelwright shop nearby. William Bell built a frame house for himself on the east side of the road in 1882,<sup>3</sup> and the Higginses lived in the Bell tenant house. The Bell and Higgins store, built between the two houses, opened in 1885. That store lasted until the 1960's.

William Bell preferred farming to being a merchant, so Higgins, as clerk, essentially ran the store.<sup>4</sup> Each of the general stores in town had a specialty as well the staple goods. Joe Higgins was interested in pharmacy. Frank Bell was the town postmaster, and the post office was maintained in the Bell and Higgins store. Eventually the partners agreed to separate. Higgins had bought the land on the west side of the road in 1892.<sup>5</sup> William Bell is said to have built his house about 1882, and according to tradition, Joseph and Annie Bell Higgins built their own house soon after.<sup>6</sup>

There are several pictures in the Montgomery Historical Society's photo collection and private collections which show the Higgins house and yard. These show the house as essentially the same as it is today, including the iron fence.<sup>7</sup>

Annie and Joe Higgins had two daughters, Cornelia Higgins Howard and Rachel Higgins Griffith. The daughters eventually had a home on 16th Street in Washington and used the Laytonsville house as a summer home. As they became older, they used the Laytonsville house year round. Neither of the daughters had children, so the house was sold to a first cousin, Remus and Maude (Bell) Riggs in 1961.

**FOOTNOTES:**

(See Attachment Sheet A)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Montgomery County Land and Marriage Records.  
 Photograph, Montgomery County Historical Society files.  
 Interviews: Cuyler Duvall and Maude Bell Riggs (1979).

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 60,797 square feet

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Anne Wolf

John Barrow

Architectural Description

ORGANIZATION

Sugarloaf Regional Trails

DATE

October 1979

STREET & NUMBER

Box 87

TELEPHONE

926-4510

CITY OR TOWN

Dickerson

STATE

Maryland 20753

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438

FOOTNOTES:

1. Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., BS12/278 (April 8, 1844).
2. Montgomery County Courthouse Marriage Records.
3. Interview with Maude Bell Riggs.
4. Interview with Cuyler Duvall.
5. Land Records, op. cit., JA33/28 (March 29, 1892).
6. Interview with Maude Bell Riggs.
7. Laytonsville file, Montgomery Historical Society photo collection.
8. Land Records, op. cit., 2908/463 (November 9, 1961).

Attachment Sheet B  
Joseph Higgins House

M: 14/37/3  
Laytonsville H.D.

*The Joseph Higgins house*

